

Remarks Following Discussions With President Cesar Gaviria Trujillo of Colombia

February 26, 1991

President Bush. Mr. President, it has been a privilege to meet with you and to share our thoughts on critical challenges that our countries must face together. You're a man of courage, the worthy political heir of your nation's General Santander, who said, "If the sword gave us independence, the law will give us liberty." You're a man devoted to law and to liberty, and for that, you have our admiration and respect.

Today, we held a thorough and frank discussion on a range of issues of mutual concern, particularly the drug war and joint economic matters. I view this as a vital meeting. For although there is a crisis demanding our attention halfway around the world, we will not neglect the very pressing needs and opportunities in our own hemisphere.

One of the most urgent of these is the fierce battle that we're waging against the scourge of drugs. President Gaviria talked to me in great detail of the efforts, the heroic efforts that Colombia is making in this fight. We honor him and his countrymen, knowing they've borne a very difficult burden in this war and knowing that it is their survival that's at stake every day.

Our hearts are with the Colombian people who have suffered so much from drug-related outlaw violence. This has included the murder of President Gaviria's own cousin only days ago by these narco-terrorists. We want to tell Colombians that they inspire us by standing up—despite intimidation, despite the costs—for justice and for law.

As we spoke today, I made it clear that Colombia is not alone in this fight. Both our countries recognize that drug production and drug use threaten our futures and our very lives. We are determined to defeat this enemy. Together, I am more and more convinced, especially after these talks, that we will win this war.

At the Cartagena summit, we said that we accepted our responsibility to cut drug demand in the United States. I told the President today that our work is succeeding;

drug use here in the United States is on the decline. And also at that summit, we pledged to help Colombia and her neighbors in their struggle to reduce production and interrupt the transportation of drugs.

And we know that battling the drug war has indeed meant high costs to the Colombian people. And so, I'm glad to report that on February 25th our countries signed an agreement providing the first \$20 million of a total \$41 million to help ease the financial damage that the drug war has meant to his government's programs. And second, we've signed an innovative agreement on mutual judicial cooperation to more effectively prosecute the drug traffickers. And I told the President that we will sign a multimillion-dollar, long-term agreement expanding our support for his bold initiative to strengthen the Colombian judicial system.

In addition, we know we need to offer the people of the Andes viable economic alternatives to coca production. A team led by Ambassador Ed Corr has just completed a report on how we can strengthen our cooperation on agricultural issues and make our market more accessible to legal exports.

Most importantly, we've proposed the Andean Trade Initiative providing special and vitally important benefits for the Colombian producers. And I hope Congress will pass this legislation speedily.

As we look ahead to the coming century, President Gaviria and I agree that we must also make trade and economic development essential priorities. Our hemisphere must see that its future lies with free markets as well as free governments. And that's why we must forge a genuine economic partnership for the future. Last year, we proposed the Enterprise for the Americas Initiative, offering the hope of greater prosperity for all the Americas through greater international investment, freer trade, and greatly reduced debt burdens.

Colombia was the first nation to take up our offer to negotiate bilateral trade and

investment framework agreements. Well, I told the President today that we are sending to Congress legislation necessary to implement the investment, debt, and environmental aspects of the Enterprise for the Americas Initiative. And I assured him that I am absolutely committed to securing its passage.

The people of our two nations are united as neighbors. And we are united as societies threatened by the human misery brought by drugs. But we're also united as people who believe in human rights and in the creative power of liberty. We're members of what is almost the world's first fully free hemisphere.

We're battling some powerful enemies: drugs, poverty, forces opposed to democracy. But we have even more powerful resources. Simon Bolivar wrote in exile: "The veil has been torn asunder. We've already seen the light and it is not our desire to be thrust back into darkness."

Well, our nations have seen the light. And our meeting today was just one more joint step in the direction of that light. I might add that we will always be grateful to Colombia for their role at the United Nations as we formulated common opposition to the forces of evil halfway around the world in the Gulf as we stood up to the aggressor, Iraq.

But that proved to me that the goals are clear. Together we will succeed. And so, may God bless your wonderful people, and thank you for coming our way.

President Gaviria. Thank you, Mr. President. I want first of all to express in the name of the Colombian people how glad we are all because of the new order we're building with the coalition, with the cooperation of the United Nations. We are very happy for the success you have had in the Persian Gulf and the way we have built in this new order that will help all the countries, all humanity to fight poverty, to fight narco-traffic, and to fight the new problems we really have in our agenda.

You have really told the journalists how we have talked about our common problems. First of all, narco-traffic, and the way Colombia and the United States are com-

mitted against narco-trafficking in the world. We have been tracking the Cartagena meeting you had with President Barco, and we are really aware of how the United States have got results about reducing demand. That's good news for Colombian people.

I have told you, and you have recognized how we have been fighting narco-trafficking, how we have improved this year the interdiction efforts Colombia is doing. We have told you about the Colombian policy, the new judicial Colombian policy. And we are very grateful for the cooperation you are giving us with this mutual judicial agreement we have got in the day, yesterday.

With all of the efforts, I am sure we are going to dismantle the cartels. We are going to fight narco-traffic as ever. We are really committed to that, and you can be sure that this scourge of humanity will end someday with the kind of effort we have been doing. We thank you for your offer to have, through this Andean Initiative, and we hope, too, that someday very soon, Colombia can have a free trade agreement with the United States of America.

Persian Gulf Conflict

Q. Mr. President, can Saddam survive, Mr. President?

Q. Is Kuwait City liberated?

Q. Have we taken Kuwait City, sir?

President Bush. It's going very well.

Note: President Bush spoke at 1:14 p.m. at the South Portico of the White House. The following persons were referred to: Fortunto Gaviria, slain cousin of President Gaviria; Edwin G. Corr, U.S. Ambassador to Colombia; Virgilio Barco Vargas, former President of Colombia; and President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. Prior to their remarks, the two leaders met privately in the Oval Office and with U.S. and Colombian officials in the Cabinet Room, and then attended a luncheon in the Old Family Dining Room.